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WASHINGTON, July 24 (Yonhap) -- U.S. congressmen spearheading efforts to reunite Korean-Americans with their separated family members in North Korea said Tuesday they hope to start a dialogue with Pyongyang officials in September.

Rep. Mark Kirk (R-Illinois) said he is ready to meet with North Korean officials at their U.N. mission in New York, hoping that they see the issue as "a positive and humanitarian agenda between the DPRK and the U.S. Congress."

DPRK stands for North Korea's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Kirk, together with Rep. Jim Matheson (D-Utah), launched the Congressional Commission on Divided Families, a bipartisan mechanism to help some 100,000 Korean-Americans who seek to be reunited with relatives in North Korea.

The State Department welcomed the commission's efforts.

"We welcome the establishment of this congressional commission, but we are not directly involved in creating it," it said. "We support interchanges and reunions for Korean-Americans and their family members."

Tens of thousands of Korean families are separated by the demilitarized zone, a result of the 1950-1953 Korean War. While South and North Korea have conducted reunions of divided families living in their territories, Koreans living abroad have received less attention.

Kirk said he also wants to work with Christopher Hill, assistant secretary of state and top U.S. envoy to the nuclear negotiations with Pyongyang. The goal is to see if the reunion agenda "can be put on the table to foster the increasing positive trend we are in between the U.S. and the DPRK," he said.

Saemsoni, a project founded in January 2006 by the Eugene Bell Foundation, has been

collecting various databases of people searching for their families in the North. The group will join hands with the commission.

"We are going to work with all the Korean communities to create an accurate list of people that American people are searching for in North Korea," said Alice Suh of Saemsoori.

"The commission will deliver those names to the North Korean government. They will not just ask once but over and over again until we get a response," she said.